

Practical Research Information

**Middle Eastern Studies at the Oriental Institute
of the Czech Academy of Sciences**

Ondřej BERÁNEK,* Jan ZOUPLNA**

Academic research on the Middle East has a long and distinguished tradition in the Czech lands. If we were to mention only some of the founding fathers of the field in the history of the independent Czech (Czechoslovak) Republic, the following world-renowned experts — all of them also founding fathers of the Oriental Institute — would have to be included:

Alois Musil (1868–1944) — one of the first Czech Orientalists engaged in field research, who brought back remarkable findings and materials from his travels in Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula. Among his many interests, geography and ethnology gradually gained sway, as indicated by the first of his monumental works, *Arabia Petraea* (1907–1908). Under the auspices of the Viennese Academy, Musil published his four-volume, 1,633-page study, which contained ethnological observations, hundreds of illustrations, an extensive bibliography and a map supplement. In 1907, he also published his monumental two-volume *Kuseir ‘Amra*, which deals with his epochal discovery of the Amra palace, built in the Transjordan Desert in the eighth century B.C. Between 1923 and 1929, Musil made several trans-Atlantic trips to New York while preparing his six-volume *Oriental Explorations and Studies*, published between 1926 and 1928 by the American Geographical Society (AGS), the oldest nationwide geographical organization in the US. Besides a detailed description of the explored areas, these books contain many passages dealing with historical geography, history, the political situation, etc. In 1927, the AGS awarded Musil its Charles P. Daly Medal for “valuable or distinguished geographical services or labors.” Its first recipient had been the polar explorer Ronald Peary, whose contribution was acknowledged in 1902.

Bedřich Hrozný (1879–1952) — one of the world’s leading authorities in the field of Oriental studies. After studying in Berlin and London, and being well versed in Semitic languages, he devoted his attention to Assyriology. In 1914, Hrozný was engaged by the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft to publish texts found in the course of the German excavations near the Turkish village of Boğazköy. They were written in a thus far unknown language, which seemed to have been the official language of the Hittite rulers. In 1917 he published his *Die Sprache der Hethiter* — a discovery of worldwide importance, for in it Hrozný deciphered the Hittite script and demonstrated the Indo-European character of the Hittite language. He also greatly contributed to the understanding of the whole historical development of the

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ancient Near East in the 2nd millennium B.C. Thus, Hrozný's discovery became one of the greatest prewar achievements of Czech science.

Jan Rypka (1886–1968) – a prominent Czech Orientalist and professor of Iranology and Turkology at Charles University, Prague. After focusing his scholarly work on classical Turkish poets, he shifted his attention to Iranian literature. In this field, note should be taken of his edition of Nizami's work *Heft peiker*, which he published jointly with Hellmut Ritter in 1934, and, primarily, of the voluminous *Dějiny perské a tádžické literatury (History of Persian and Tajik Literature)*, a work to which he contributed a monumental survey of classical modern Persian literature.

The Oriental Institute was established in 1922. After almost a century in existence and with a successful record of fostering primary research undertaken by specialists who have comprehensive training backgrounds in languages, history, religions, and other aspects of the "Orient", we find ourselves in possession of a solid base for future developments. In addition, Oriental studies in Central and Eastern Europe emanate from different origins than their counterparts in the West, unrelated as they are to (the legacy of) colonialist expansion. Interest in the Orient stemmed, within the local context, primarily from pure intellectual curiosity, as well as from respect for the cultural heritage of ancient civilizations. As local scholars recruited from those who were themselves either suppressed or had been deprived of political independence, often for centuries, the perception of "the other" diverged from that of the West and a unique bond with Asia was forged. Hence, free of any form of post-colonial complex, the OI has actively sought to promote research excellence that reflects European academic traditions and contemporary needs. We are convinced that neither the indigenous narrative nor the view of outsiders can or should supersede each other in the global community of today. As such, the European perspective has its legitimate place and a non-personal connection to the subject matter can also be an advantage. The flexibility and open-ended approach we have adopted remains another strength as it allows us to focus on the global trends within our fields and constantly readjust to the research needs of our disciplines.

Among our other strengths belong our international cooperation reputation and the long-term presence of several international scholars among our ranks. Both points are still not the norm in the Czech Republic, especially within the field of Humanities. We also have a very dynamic team with international experience and a quality research and publication track record. Consequently, we believe that our international activities help contribute in general to the rising quality of research in the Czech Republic. As for our weaknesses, these stem from the limited scope of our disciplines, the small number of graduates, and the consequent limited size of the OI itself (a situation based on various historical factors, as well as the budget cuts of the past few decades). On the other hand, these weaknesses are not dissimilar to those of

our European counterparts. In any case, attempting to cover an area populated by a half of the world's population with three dozen researchers is a particularly challenging task.

In general, the OI focuses on four core areas: primary research, both individual and collaborative; research cooperation with both Czech and international universities and research institutions; cooperation with the State institutions; outreach to a wider audience. The general aim in all these areas is to provide high-quality and balanced research about the countries of our interest. The research directions follow the general trends in western academia and — simultaneously — build upon the history of Oriental studies in the Czech Republic. The OI is divided into three departments on a geographical basis: Middle East, South Asia (+ Central and Southeast Asia), and East Asia. This division makes it possible for specialists devoted to the study of a particular region to maintain close contact with their colleagues working on the same or similar problems within a given field. In addition, in order to provide opportunities for extending a specific methodological approach to the study of individual regions, working groups are frequently established independently of the geographical divisions. These teams are not only open to staff members from the different departments of the Institute, but also to scholars from other research bodies, both in the Czech Republic and abroad.

When it comes to the Middle East Department, the expertise of its staff reflects the diversity of the region, which encompasses, among many others, the Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Hebrew cultures in addition to the legacy of the civilizations of the Ancient Near East. At the same time, it remains one of our core aspirations to convert this seemingly incongruous multitude into a mutually interrelated (or at least compatible) set of research topics. Hence, we concentrate on two broad lines of research, relating to: 1) Islamic studies, 2) the modern and contemporary history of the Middle East. The Department aims to combine the best traditions of Czech Oriental studies (the knowledge of relevant languages, familiarity with the environment) with a more dynamic attitude towards some contemporary issues. These include both the chronic challenges facing the region (the functioning of the state, the role of religion in society, the place of minorities, etc.) and the key phenomena of long-term significance (political and intellectual history, foreign relations etc.). Besides conducting the primary research, our experts are also engaged in teaching at various universities, both in the Czech Republic and abroad. We run several joint PhD programs with the Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague.

The Middle East Department hosts the following researchers:

Alivernini, Sergio (in the OI 2016–)

PhD in Philological and Literary Studies about Ancient Near East and pre-Islamic Iran,
Sapienza University of Rome, 2010

Specialization: Mesopotamian history, Mesopotamian mathematics, administration of the

Third Dynasty of Ur

Beránek, Ondřej (2013–)

PhD in History of the Middle East, Charles University, Prague, 2007

Specialization: modern and contemporary history of the Middle East, Salafi Islam, history of Saudi Arabia

Drechselová, Lucie (2019–)

PhD, double degree: Charles University (Turkish Studies) and École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS, Political Science), Paris, 2018

Specialization: political history of Turkey in the 20th century, gender and women's rights in Turkey, Kurdish question, generation of 1968 and 1978 and politicization processes in Turkey

Melčák, Miroslav (2009–)

PhD in History of the Middle East, Charles University, Prague, 2009

Specialization: social and cultural history of the pre-modern Middle East, religious endowments (*awqāf*), urban history of Mesopotamia

Ostřanský, Bronislav (2004–)

PhD in History of the Middle East, Charles University, Prague, 2005

Specialization: medieval Islamic thought and folk religiosity, Islamic mysticism, millennialism and apocalypics, Islam in the Czech Republic

Özel Volfová, Gabriela (2013–)

PhD candidate, Charles University, Prague

Specialization: Turkish foreign policy, Turkey-EU relations, nationalism, gender and Islam

Prosecký, Jiří (1978–2019), Emeritus researcher

PhD in Ancient Near Eastern Studies, Charles University, Prague, 1990

Specialization: Akkadian (Assyro-Babylonian) literature, cultural history of the Ancient Near East

Šabasevičiūtė, Giedrė (2015–)

PhD in Sociology, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, 2015

Specialization: religious and liberal intellectuals in Arab countries and Turkey, Arab literature, literary circles in Egypt

Schwartz, Kevin (2017–)

PhD in Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2014

Specialization: cultural and intellectual history of Persia/Iran

Steuer, Clément (2013–2018)

PhD in Political Science, Université de Lyon, Lyon, 2010

Specialization: political party system in the Arab world, particularly in Egypt

Taglia, Stefano (2014–)

PhD in Ottoman History, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, 2012

Specialization: history of the late Ottoman Empire, nationalism and minorities in the Middle East

Zouplna, Jan (2003–)

PhD in History of the Middle East, Charles University, Prague, 2006

Specialization: modern Jewish history, Israeli history, modern and contemporary history of the Middle East

Selected recent interdisciplinary and interinstitutional projects:

Death, Graves, and the Hereafter in Islam: the Muslim Perception of the Last Things in the Middle Ages and Today

As in other religions, death, graves, their visitation and diverse ideas about the Hereafter play a crucial role in Islam. In this regard, the practices of most Muslims clearly contradict the statements of normative Islam. Despite centuries of Islamic jurists' efforts to submit existing manners and customs to Islamic law, we can argue that the gap between normative and popular religiosity has not reached such depth in any other aspect of Islam. This contradiction has been manifested throughout Islamic history and we can still observe controversies around graves all over the Islamic world. The question of graves and their visitation has repeatedly become the "battlefield" among followers of different Islamic streams, especially Salafis and Sufis. The Last Things in Islam can be examined from different points of view, among others as a legal problem, as a distinctive part of Muslim folklore or as a subject of Islamic writings. Thus, the main objective of this project was to provide multidisciplinary research on the subject to fill the empty space in the field.

Monuments of Mosul in Danger

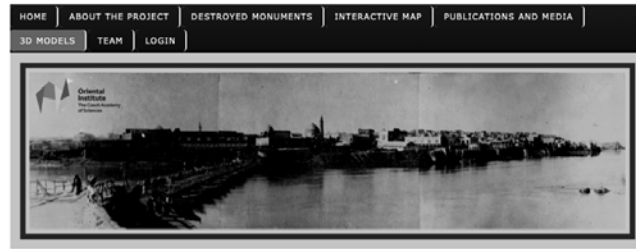
<<http://www.monumentsofmosul.com>>

The project Monuments of Mosul in Danger was launched in reaction to a serious threat to the Mosul architectural sites from ISIS (Daesh), who seized the town in June 2014. In the period up to the end of its rule in 2017, dozens of historical sites were razed to the ground or severely damaged. Monuments of diverse types, such as mosques, madrasas, mausolea, graveyards, churches and monasteries were subject to destruction. The project has four main aims:

1. monitoring destructive activities in Mosul by means of satellite imagery; identification of destroyed sites; creation of an interactive map of destroyed monuments;
2. architectural and historical analysis of destroyed monuments by means of preserved visual (photographs, documentary films) and plan documentation as well as historical

- and recent descriptions published by Iraqi scholars;
3. mapping of all identifiable extant historical monuments in the town, which are made accessible through a complex interactive map;
 4. analysis of the ideological background of the destruction.

Monuments of Mosul in Danger



Shrine of Yahya ibn al-Qasim

3D reconstruction of the Shrine of Yahya ibn al-Qasim (copyright - Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague). The full resolution model can be seen at the Youtube channel "Monuments of Mosul in Danger".



“3D models” *Monuments of Mosul in Danger* <<http://www.monumentsofmosul.com/3d-models>>

Selected recent publications of OI’s researchers (printed in bold) in the field of Middle Eastern and Islamic studies:¹

Beránek, Ondřej – Pavel Ťupek, *The Temptation of Graves in Salafi Islam: Iconoclasm, Destruction and Idolatry*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018.

In various parts of the Islamic world over the past decades virulent attacks have targeted Islamic funeral and sacral architecture. Rather than being random acts of vandalism, these are associated with the idea of performing one’s religious duty as attested by the Salafi/Wahhabi tradition and texts. Graves, shrines and tombs are regarded by some Muslims as having the potential to tempt a believer to polytheism. Hence the duty to level the graves to the ground (*taswiyat al-qubūr*). In illuminating the ideology behind these acts, this book explains the current destruction of graves in the Islamic world and traces the ideological sources of iconoclasm in their historical perspective, from medieval theological and legal debates to contemporary Islamist movements, using the case studies of Ibn Taymiyya, Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab, the formation of Saudi ulama, Nasir al-Din al-Albani, and ISIS, among others.

¹ Each abstract / description / introduction is from original publication.

Drechselová, Lucie – Adnan Çelik (eds.), *Kurds in Turkey: Ethnographies of Heterogeneous Experiences*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019.

The edited volume unites eight scholars who offer ethnographic studies based on their latest research. The chapters are clustered around four main headings: women's participation, paramilitary activities, space, and the infrapolitics of resistance. Each heading assembles two chapters which are in dialog with each other and offer complementary and at times competing perspectives. All four headings correspond to the emerging domains of research in Kurdish studies. Authors share a micro-level focus and base their argument on extensive fieldwork. In the wake of massive urban destructions and renewed warfare in the Kurdish region in Turkey, this volume also takes a stance against the memoricide of the Kurdish municipal experience and Kurdish cultural production.

Drechselová, Lucie, *Local Power and Female Political Pathways in Turkey: Cycles of Exclusion*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

This book explores the “Turkish paradox” – women's lower representation in local politics than in parliament. By analyzing life stories of 200 female municipal councilors and party representatives, it offers a comprehensive assessment of what makes local politics in Turkey particularly inaccessible to women. It places women's pathways within the cycles of exclusion, starting by political socialization, going through the candidate recruitment process and continuing after the election. The research presented here brings together gender studies and political sociology and offers novel applications of concepts including intersectionality and biographical availability. It covers all major political parties and diverse local configurations in Turkey, and reveals political strategies of women in conservative parties as well as the reasons behind the exceptionally high representation of women within the pro-Kurdish political parties. The book further sheds some light on the intricate relationship between women's political activity and regime change in the context of democratic backsliding.

Melčák, Miroslav – Ondřej Beránek, “ISIS's Destruction of Mosul's Historical Monuments: Between Media Spectacle and Religious Doctrine,” *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 6, 2 (2017): 389–415.

The attacks on archaeological heritage by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) are often considered to be revivals of the phenomenon of iconoclasm. This interpretation has recently become the object of criticism, arguing that ISIS's behavior should instead be viewed as a form of “iconoclasm”: a highly effective method of producing visual imagery that is intended to be disseminated through media in order to shock both the world and local audience. In this sense, the iconoclasm loses its traditional meaning and exists only as a historical reference. This paper argues that iconoclasm should not be considered as a mere pretext, but as one

possible genuine rationale behind ISIS's destructive behavior. To support the argument, the paper systematically tracked the destruction of monuments in Mosul after ISIS seized control of the town in June 2014. The analysis clearly showed that ISIS mainly targeted the funerary (tombs, shrines) and funerary-related architecture (mosques attached to tombs) and only a small portion of these cases were utilized in ISIS's media propaganda. The article is based on clear empirical data, which were obtained through modern methods of satellite imagery in order to get the most accurate picture of the destruction.

Nováček, Karel – **Miroslav Melčák** – Lenka Starková – Narmin Ali M. Amin, *Medieval Urban Landscape in Northeastern Mesopotamia*. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016.

More than fifteen sites of either confirmed or conjectured urban status existed between the sixth and nineteenth centuries in the particular region of northeastern Mesopotamia, bounded by the rivers Great Zāb, Little Zāb and Tigris. This study concentrates on the investigation of this urban network. The archaeological substance of the deserted sites is mostly very well preserved in the relief of the arid steppe environment and can be excellently identified in satellite images of several types. The archaeological investigation of these settlements, augmented by a revised historical topography, offers a unique opportunity for the holistic study of the diversity, temporal dynamics and mutual relationships within the urban network that developed in the hinterland of Baghdad and Samarra, the two largest supercenters of the Old World. This collective monograph puts together archaeological and historical data available for the individual sites, including analyses of pottery obtained by surface survey. The materially rich final report of the three-year project is supplemented by an interpretative chapter that focuses on detailed topographical comparisons of the sites, their landscape contexts, and the dynamics of the urban system within the framework of studies on Near-Eastern Islamic-period cities.

Ostránský, Bronislav, *The Jihadist Preachers of the End Times: ISIS Apocalyptic Propaganda*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019.

Focusing on apocalyptic manifestations found in ISIS propaganda, this book situates the group's agenda in the broader framework of contemporary Muslim thought and explains key topics in millennial thinking within the spiritual context of modern Islamic apocalypticism. Based on the group's primary sources as well as medieval Muslim apocalyptic literature and its modern interpretations, the book analyses the ways ISIS presents its message concerning the Last Days as a meaningful, inventive and frightening expression of collectively shared expectations relating to the supposedly approaching End Times.

Šabasevičiūtė, Giedrė, "Sayyid Qutb and the Crisis of Culture in Late 1940s Egypt,"

***International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 50, 1 (2018): 85–101.**

This article locates Sayyid Qutb within the context of a rising challenge to established literary elites in late 1940s Egypt. As part of the local unrest against various types of elite in postwar Egypt, young and aspiring writers called for a comprehensive intellectual reshuffling to meet the cultural needs of the postcolonial Arab states. Drawing on three periodicals published by Leftist, Islamist, and independent intellectuals, the article argues that criticism of the cultural establishment was shared by actors from opposing political persuasions who all promoted a similar vision of culture. Specifically, it suggests that the method of “Islamic literature” proposed by Qutb in 1954 was a consequence of the general rise in commitment levels in literature that equally affected Marxists, Muslim Brothers, and young, politically uncommitted writers. By shedding light on intellectual collaboration between Qutb, Muslims Brothers, Marxists, and independent writers in the late 1940s and early 1950s, it challenges previous scholarly narratives that place the Islamist project outside the Egyptian intellectual field.

Schwartz, Kevin, “A Transregional Persianate Library: The Production and Circulation of *Tadhkiras* of Persian Poets in the 18th and 19th Centuries,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 52, 1 (2020): 109–135.

The *tadhkira* (biographical anthology) represents one of the most prolific and prevalent categories of texts produced in Islamicate societies, yet few studies have sought to understand the larger processes that governed their production and circulation on a transregional basis. This article examines and maps the production, circulation, and citation networks of *tadhkiras* of Persian poets in the 18th and 19th centuries. It understands *tadhkiras* of Persian poets as a transregional library that served as a repository of accessible and circulating texts meant to be incorporated, reworked, and repackaged by a cadre of authors separated by space and time. By relying on a macroanalytical approach, quantifiable data, and digital mapping, this article highlights the overall construction of the transregional library itself, the impact of state disintegration and formation on its constitution, and the different ways authors on opposite ends of the Persianate world came to view this library by the end of the 19th century.

Schwartz, Kevin, *Remapping Persian Literary History, 1700–1900*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.

Integrating forgotten tales of literary communities across Iran, Afghanistan and South Asia – at a time when Islamic empires were fracturing and new state formations were emerging – this book offers a more global understanding of Persian literary culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It challenges the manner in which Iranian nationalism has infiltrated Persian literary history writing and recovers the multi-regional breadth and vibrancy of a global lingua franca connecting peoples and places across Islamic Eurasia.

Focusing on three case studies (eighteenth-century Isfahan, a small court in South India and the literary climate of the Anglo-Afghan war), it reveals the literary and cultural ties that bound this world together as well as some of the trends that broke it apart.

Steuer, Clément – Alexis Blouët, “The Notions of Citizenship and the Civil State in the Egyptian Transition Process,” *Middle East Law and Governance* 7, 2 (2015): 236–256.

This article deals with two notions that have become central in the Egyptian political and constitutional transition process since 2011 — citizenship and the “Civil State” — and presents the struggle to define them that took place during the 2012 writing of the Constitution. Even though the principle of citizenship is not seriously contested by any of the important political players, its scope and relationship with Islamic normativity (subordination, preeminence, or independence) have both been fiercely debated. As for the notion of the Civil State, it is characterized by an important semantic haziness, which results in a political tension around the issue of its definition, although there is relative consensus in Egypt regarding the term itself. The political and legal struggles around the writing and the adoption of the 2012 Constitution reveal how the tension related to these two notions has been embodied in the discussions surrounding several constitutional articles.

Steuer, Clément, “The Modularity of the ‘Revolutionary’ Repertoire of Action in Egypt: Origins and Appropriation by Different Players,” *Social Movement Studies* 17, 1 (2018): 113–118.

The Egyptian “revolutionary” repertoire of action, that is to say the repertoire used by the protesters of January 2011, was characterized by a combination of several features: occupation of a symbolic place; “horizontal” forms of organization; recourse to new electronic information and communication technologies (especially social networks); and rhetoric centered around universal values such as dignity, social justice, human rights, and democracy. This repertoire was born as a result of the merging of two parallel cycles of mobilization, which had actually started during the previous decade, one animated by activists from the educated middle class, and the other by workers struggling for economic and social reforms. After the fall of Hosni Mubarak in February 2011, it demonstrated its extreme modularity, being appropriated by different players from all sections of the political spectrum, from the Salafist *hāzimūn* to proponents of the military power.

Taglia, Stefano, *Intellectuals and Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Young Turks on the Challenges of Modernity*. London: Routledge, 2015.

This book uncovers Young Turk political and social ideas at the end of the nineteenth century, during the intellectual phase of the movement. Analyzing the life in exile of two of the most

charismatic leaders of the Young Turk movement, Ahmed Rıza and Mehmet Sabahattin, the book unravels their plans for the future of the Ottoman Empire, covering issues of power, religion, citizenship, minority rights, the role of the West, and the accountability of the Sultan. The book follows Rıza and Sabahattin through their association with philosophical circles, and highlights how their emphasis on intellectualism and elitism had a twofold effect. On the one hand, seeing themselves as enlightened and entrusted with a mission, they engaged in enduring debates, leaving an important legacy for both Ottoman and Republican rule. On the other hand, the rigidity resulting from elitism and intellectualism prevented the conception of concrete plans for change, causing a schism at the 1902 Congress of Ottoman Liberals and marking the end of the intellectual phase. Using bilingual period journals, contemporary accounts, police archives and political and philosophical treatises, this book is of interest to students, scholars and researchers of Middle East and Ottoman History, and Political Science more broadly.

Taglia, Stefano, “The Feasibility of Ottomanism as a Nationalist Project: The View of Albanian Young Turk Ismail Kemal,” *Die Welt des Islams* 56, 3–4 (2016): 336–358.

This article is part of a thematic issue, “Ottomanism Then and Now: Historical and Contemporary Meanings,” published by the academic journal *Die Welt des Islams* and guest-edited by Stefano Taglia. He contributed with an article and an Introduction, and the volume has quickly become a reference work for the academic community working on Ottomanism and Neo-Ottomanism, with frequent citations and widespread use. The article surveys the appeal of Ottomanism for non-dominant group members of the Young Turk organisation, i.e. non-Muslims or non-Turkish members of the movement. It focuses on a specific reading of Ottomanism as a nationalist discourse articulated by Young Turk intellectuals in exile. The article analyzes the actions, thoughts and writings of Ottoman Albanian İsmail Kemal who, in 1900, after an influential career in Ottoman officialdom, escaped to Europe and affiliated himself with the leaders of the organisation in exile. What emerges from this study is that Ottomanism was a feasible discourse for Young Turk activists from both a dominant and non-dominant background, until the movement, by then organised in the Committee of Union and Progress, adopted an authoritarian and pro-Turkist stance after 1909. The novelty of the article resides in its emphasis that an assessment of the role of Young Turks from a non-Muslim or non-Turkish background needs to include a consideration of a simultaneous and compatible role of such members as working for imperial reform and for the improvement and protection of their own particular community.

Taglia, Stefano, “Pragmatism and Expediency: Ottoman Calculations and the Establishment of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic,” *Caucasus Survey* 8, 1 (2020): 45–58.

This article interrogates Ottoman sources from the period leading up to and following the creation, in 1918, of the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (TDFR) to shed light on the reasons behind Istanbul's initial backing for this Caucasian state. Despite the suggestion that Ottoman Unionist policies were informed by pan-Turkist ideals, it emerges that Istanbul considered, first and foremost, the geopolitical interests of the Empire. Whether this entailed using foreign Muslims to control a strategic area or favoring the creation of a political entity that was not considered fully feasible, Ottoman self-interest was paramount. Controlling the Caucasus, limiting German, British and Russian influence, and re-gaining lost territory were the only considerations that guided Ottoman policies. This explains Ottoman ambivalence in supporting the emergence of the TDFR, as well as Ottoman willingness to pursue further territorial claims which undermined the very existence of the TDFR itself. The conclusions reached in this article have significance for the larger understanding of Ottoman policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as too often pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism are used to explain the policies of Istanbul, while the Ottoman political elite was more usually guided by pragmatic considerations.

Zouplna, Jan, "The Revisionist Union and Britain: From Declarations of 'loyalty' to the Employment of 'Methods of Bullying'," *Journal of Israeli History* 36, 1 (2017): 23–45.

The nature of British rule in Palestine, as it settled down after the approval of the Mandate in 1922, had its critics among the Zionist ranks. Using original sources, this paper examines the attitudes of the leadership of the Revisionist Union (RU) towards the British from the first quarter of the 1920s till the mid-1930s. Unlike the later paramilitary organizations, the Revisionist founders, convinced, in their own words, of the common interests shared with the British Empire, had no intention of terminating the British presence, but sought to transform it in order to serve Zionism's objectives. While official Zionism preferred backstage diplomacy, the RU pursued a different strategy—appealing directly to the masses and making its cause as public and vocal as possible. Eventually, the RU's strategy combined the principle of pro-British orientation with merciless criticism of Palestine policies on the ground. As far as the British were concerned, the Colonial Office was just about willing to tolerate a set of proposals they saw as unrealistic. Once these started to actively erode the integrity of British policy in the region, unsolicited "enthusiasm" was reclassified as dangerous "extremism."

Zouplna, Jan, "Readjustment or Reversal? The 'Normalization' of Relations between France and Israel, 1957–63," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. (Published Online: 20 Jan 2020)

French policy towards Israel in the 1950s and 1960s depended on a number of variables.

Above all, French diplomacy never considered Israel apart from broader Middle Eastern and international considerations. The collusion of the Sinai Campaign of 1956 transformed this situation only to a certain extent; parallel evaluation of the merits and limits of Franco-Israeli relations predated the establishment of the French Fifth Republic. A process of readjustment undertaken by de Gaulle's administration came to the fore in 1960. It combined elements of practical assistance with reserved association in public. The nature of transition defied simple classification. While Israel was concerned about allegedly waning support, the official French narrative denied the existence of a major shift in the substance of bilateral ties. In a way, each party misinterpreted the actions of the other: for Israel, ongoing French assistance did not fully outweigh the decline in overt expressions of 'friendship'; viewed from Paris, the reactions to every minor French 'no' seemed exaggerated. The limitations accompanying bilateral trade confirmed these diverging perspectives even further. Yet, seen in its proper historical context, the outcome of this process was not set in stone.

Forthcoming in 2021:

- Nováček, K. – **M. Melčák** – **O. Beránek** – L. Starková, *Mosul after Islamic State: The Quest for Lost Architectural Heritage*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Šabasevičiūtė, Giedrė, *Sayyid Qutb: An Intellectual Biography*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

For a comprehensive overview of the OI's research results in 2013–2017 period see:

<<http://www.orient.cas.cz/miranda2/export/sitesavcr/data.avcr.cz/humansci/orient/sys/galerie-download/OrientalDigital2.pdf>>.

and for the 2018–2019 period see:

<http://www.orient.cas.cz/miranda2/export/sitesavcr/data.avcr.cz/humansci/orient/sys/galerie-download/OI_CAS_Publications_Research_2018_2019_web2.pdf>.